

K. (D. C. Rympley A.)
A *76*
L E T T E R

TO THE
COURT OF DIRECTORS

FOR
A F F A I R S

OF THE
UNITED COMPANY of MERCHANTS of ENGLAND
Trading to the EAST INDIES.

CONCERNING THE
PROPOSED SUPERVISORSHIP.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
COURT OF DIRECTORS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

AS I have never been practised to speak in public, either in the *great assembly the House of Commons*, nor in the *little assembly the Robinhood*, I am afraid the force of the objections I made to a supervisorship in the last General Court, was much weakened by my inability.

Indeed many objections which occurred to me, I thought would, with much greater propriety, be made to the Court of Directors, than in a General Court; for, as I have no purposes of party or resentment to serve, any thing which may really conduce to the welfare of the Company, cannot, I am well persuaded, fail of being acceptable to you, however much we may differ in opinion; and it seems but a becoming respect, to lay my sentiments before you previous to a more general publication.

The *opinion* of any individual is of no importance: it has been the study of my life to get free from the bias of every opinion; for I have ever experienced *opinions* to be the foundation of ignorance and folly. *Facts* are the proper objects of consideration, and if men would determine according to their *own* judgments on *these*, they would seldom err in essentials.

However, although I am not so absurd as to think my opinion of any consequence to the public, I think it is the right, not only of every Proprietor, but of every member of the community, to declare his sentiments, and the reasons for them, on every matter in which the interest of the Public is at stake. I must be allowed to say, I have no motive for this proceeding,

A

but

but from conviction that it is what I owe to my *friends abroad*, to the *Company*, and to their *service* (which I have been accustomed from my youth to consider with that kind of veneration habit gives us towards our native country), and to *this kingdom*, which must be undone, if the Company does not preserve its independency.

It would be a very unjust reproach to the Court of Directors, after the particular instance of their *justice* to myself, to suppose, that giving my opinion freely, on a matter so important, could expose me to their resentment; however, I should be very unworthy of that trust for which I am a candidate, and of the honourable character given me by a very distinguished Director, which I shall ever be proud to deserve, if any hopes of favour could induce me to do, or fear of danger deter me from doing, what appears to be my public duty.

I confess it is to me a matter of much concern, to perceive, through every branch of this kingdom, an inclination to exert *all* the powers inherent in government: it is a *dangerous prognostic*!

As I paid the utmost attention to what was said in the General Court, I beg leave to recapitulate all the arguments which I can recollect were urged in behalf of the measure.

“That the Court of Directors were chosen by the Proprietors, to manage their affairs; and, therefore, that they should be confided in?”

In reply to this argument of *implicit confidence*, which is more than any *Human Beings* have a claim to, and indeed more than *They* are willing to allow the Divinity; it occurs to me the Court of Directors are *only* chosen to conduct the affairs of the Company in the *common* and accustomary modes; but by no means to introduce a *new plan* of government. Common forms require common capacities, and the errors of one year may be corrected the next: but when a new system is introduced, it must be of the utmost benefit, or of the most fatal consequences; and although every man may see *defects* in the National Constitution, I hope in God this country will never let any set of men introduce a new one.

This

This argument is indeed one of the strongest which can be urged against the superintendence; for are not the Governors and Councils in India intrusted with the management of the Company's affairs abroad? and, therefore, according to this argument, the Court of Directors should confide in them. But it was alledged, that "The servants had disobeyed the most positive orders."

Positive orders have been *disobeyed*; and yet, "It was the *unanimous* opinion of a General Court, from the extracts then read of the Company's advices lately received from India, *that the affairs of the company were in a flourishing situation.*" Of what nature must these *positive* orders have been, which, *disobeyed*, leave the Company's affairs in a *flourishing situation*? It is the nature of an Englishman to live in a constant apprehension of ruin; and perhaps this apprehension keeps him from it. If the Company's affairs are in a *flourishing situation*, they cannot require a *precipitate* commission; and it can scarcely be supposed they are in so dangerous a situation, as to make it necessary to effect a *total* change in a few months. If they had been thought in this *desperate* situation, in justice to their *creditors*, and to the community, the dividend would have been announced at 6 per cent.

This charge of disobedience is echoed through every corner of the India-House. The lowest clerk says *our* servants do not regard *us*, when they get *abroad*. With all submission, I was long abroad in the service of the Company; but I never did think myself a servant to the *Clerks*, to the *Directors*, nor to the *Proprietors*, but to the *Company*, which continues stable and permanent, and to which the Proprietors themselves, as well as the servants at home and abroad, are but *relatives*. The very nature of the Company's affairs makes that part of the constitution necessary, by which a *dispensing* power is left with the administration abroad. I confess, therefore, the charge of disobedience does not to me appear an objection of so much weight as it seems to the Directors. I conceive it cannot be denied that persons on the spot have documents of knowledge, which it is impossible for the Directors to have: it has been acknowledged that the

orders have been penned by Mr. Scrafton; the point then is, “whether Mr. Scrafton’s opinion formed in England, approved “*in every respect* by Mr. Vansittart, (to give the argument its “whole weight) or the opinion of the Gentlemen in the ad- “ministration of the Company’s affairs abroad, formed on the “*spot*, is most to be confided in?” I will allow that both parties mean the interest of the company, and therefore there can be no doubt that sending Mr. Scrafton and Mr. Vansittart as supervisors, is not referring to an *impartial* judge the decision of the question; but sending men to *enforce* their *own* system and opinions: which, I say, appears to me a very great injustice to the Gentlemen abroad.

There are many *impartial* men in England, well informed of the Company’s affairs; and I will venture to say, if the *orders* from the Court of Directors, and the *reasons* given by the administration abroad for not carrying them into execution, were communicated to these impartial men, their opinion would be of more essential service to the Company, than any system the supervisors can enforce. And as the Chairman intimated, that all those persons had been consulted, whom the Court of Directors thought could give them advice on this important commission, I will take leave to mention, that three men able to decide on the general management of the Company’s affairs, and on the particular state of the coast, Mr. Saunders, Lord Pigot, and Mr. Orme, have escaped recollection: I only mention those whom *I know* have not been consulted.

It was said “there was no charge against any man in particular;” indeed there does not seem room for such a charge, as the two principal settlements, Madras and Bengal, will, when the Supervisors arrive in India, be under *New Governors*, of whose conduct in that important trust, the Company have had no trial, and whose characters are unimpeached, as they must have been to have obtained their nomination without the influence of *party*.

Super-

Supervisors have been sent to Bencoolen, and to other places, but it was when the affairs of the Company were in the utmost confusion, and the heads of the settlement unworthy of the trust reposed in them. I believe this is the first instance of a Supervisorship, where the Governor was not considered to be deserving of dismissal. I have read as much of the Company's antient records as most men, but I do not recollect *one* instance of such a Commission where the Chief was *not* thought to deserve dismissal, and dismissed accordingly. Indeed, if a Governor is not *suspected*, it is a much more natural mode of government to give him *extensive* powers for a *time*, than to send out a commissioner over him.

Is it not obvious that every boy, and the meanest Indian in every settlement, will throw out reproachful insinuations against the administration as soon as the supervisors leave it, "That *now* they are *great* men, but were *small* enough yesterday." I will be bold to say, that this shock to the administration will do more essential disservice than any regulations can do good.

It was said from behind the bar, that "It was the interest of the Governors and Commanders in chief abroad, to involve the company in disputes; that there might be *congresses*; and that they might reap the harvest!"—Are not the servants excluded by covenants from receiving presents? if there are any who have broke their covenants, *they* are proper objects of resentment; but general imputations are *odious*, *impolitic*, and *unjust*. Can the supervisors be put under any stronger *exclusion* than oath and covenant? and what reason can be given, that they shall be more incorruptible than the Gentlemen now abroad? particularly as an Indian Prince might offer to the omnipotent commissioners, a bribe of millions for some grant or concession, which the powers of the present establishment could not give up, even supposing the *many* members of the administration were won over by the immense sum offered.

It has been also said from behind the bar, "that the servants abroad have ideas of being umpires of Indostan."

This.

This *idea* is mentioned by Mr. Scrafton, in his Sketch of the History of Bengal, printed in 1761 (*Vide* Vansittart's Letter to the Proprietors, 1767, p. 21). Other men may in time get rid of this idea, as well as Mr. Scrafton.

It is dangerous talking vaguely on so critical a subject. *Umpires* of *Indostan* are fine words, whether considered as the effervescence of vain-glory, or as the froth of general invective. To imagine the Company can maintain their present possessions, without a very strict attention to the political interest and connexion of all the Indian powers, would betray such ignorance as I cannot suppose to exist : and however chimerical a balance of power in India may be, the sentiments of Lord Clive, concerning the Abdallys were certainly founded on just apprehensions ; the northern parts of the Mogul empire, inhabited by a bold and hardy race, are always to be considered with attention. —It was said, “ The administration of Bengal have desired districts of the Hindaput Rajah, 400 miles distant from the “ Company's possessions.”

This charge is so very extraordinary, that it was to me a matter of great astonishment to hear it from behind the bar; 400 miles from the Company's present possessions ! Be so good as look at the map, and see where that distance will carry us—From Patnah, almost to Delhi.—Alarming indeed ! this seemed to confirm the reports propagated in Lord Clive's name of the army's intended march ; but upon enquiry I found the Hindaput Rajah lies to the south of Eliabas ; and by Mr. Scrafton's map one third of this distance brings us into the Morattoo districts. It must, therefore, be evident some men have not considered this point with that attention it claims. Give me leave to ask “ If it was not suspected that Sujah Dowlah meant “ to take the field, on pretence of an ancient claim to these “ districts ?” If the administration of Bengal thought this would be a pretence for raising a war, was it not prudent in them to remove it ? For I presume no man will pretend to say, that “ if Sujah Dowlah was engaged in an Indian war, the Company would not, sooner or later, be drawn into it ?” The plea

plea for desiring these districts was to support the expence of the brigade at Eliabas, which the Court of Directors had ordered to be withdrawn from thence to Patnah; but which the Gentlemen at Bengal have declared cannot be done consistent with the security of the province. Perhaps, thinking the Company's orders proceeded from œconomy, they might think the occasion of Sujah Dowlah's views against the Hindaput Rajah was a fair one to obtain such districts as would bear the expence of the brigade at Eliabas; and might conclude, that there being no deduction from the revenues of Bengal, all parties would be satisfied. But as the difference of opinion about the brigade seems to be the great point in dispute, it is a matter which ought thoroughly to be canvassed, particularly, as this is an exception to the Chairman's general declaration, that Mr. Vansittart entirely agreed with Mr. Scrafton's sentiments.

Mr. Scrafton's objections are "that whilst the brigade is at Eliabas with the King, we shall ever think ourselves umpires of India; and that the vicinity of Sujah Dowlah is too great a temptation for any General, at the head of a fine army, who must ever be eager to distinguish himself in the field."

The last objection seems to be a very extraordinary one; for this General would have the same temptation to action if he lay on the *east*, as he has lying to the *west* of Sujah Dowlah.

The other objection is of a more complex nature.

First, if Sujah Dowlah wishes, as some pretend, to carry the King to Delhi, can it be our interest to let him effect this, and unite the northern parts of the empire, under the dominion of the Mogul?—Mr. Scrafton says, it would be better for the Company to have an Aurungzebe on the Mogul's throne.—But he forgets that Aurungzebes very seldom mount any throne; and that if an Aurungzebe was on the throne of Delhi, the English would not be left with the duannee of Bengal.

Secondly, supposing Sujah Dowlah thinks it more expedient to regain his *own* dominions, which the English bestowed on Shah

Shah Allam, the titular Mogul; would it be thought either for the honour or interest of the English to permit it?

Lastly, suppose Sujah Dowlah should leave the King in peace, and employ his arms to the south, till, by the reduction of the Hindaput, and other petty Rajahs, he should open a communication with the Morattoes—would this be a security to Bengal? Whilst there is a brigade at Eliabas, he can pursue none of these objects: remove it, and he may chuse which he pleases. The attention which has been shewn to him has given him a great consequence; and his particular situation makes it necessary to keep a watchful eye on him. He is a *particular* exception; but it appears to me a capital error in our Indian politics, that as soon as ever a Prince becomes considerable, by establishing a good government and respectable force in his own country, we immediately take the alarm, and think it necessary to clip the wings of the eagle before it is full-pinioned. The danger of accession of power in Europe, arises from the succession being regular and well-established; in India it is not so: there is very little chance that any country should long remain in a line of enterprizing men and wise princes; and in India there cannot arise any *great houses*. The power in India generally drops with the life of the Prince, and the country again droops under the administration of weak Princes and wicked ministers.

A wise Prince will always be solicitous of the English friendship, and too sensible of our power to be inclined to enter the lists with us: he will employ his forces where we are not engaged as principals or auxiliaries, and will be glad to purchase our friendship with the free trade of his country, which a war with him deprives us of, and spreads ruin every where.

It was alleged in general, that the objects of this commission were

“ To bring about a general pacification on honourable terms.

“ But if this should be found impossible, to employ the force of the three presidencies on one uniform plan.

“ To reduce the enormous military expence within bounds:

“ And

“ And to consider if the revenues of Bengal cannot be put under some better regulations.”

The first is a very desirable object; but, I must confess, as there are many men in the council at Madras, particularly Mr. Dupré and Mr. Hastings, who had no share in the springs of the present war, I cannot conceive there is a necessity for any new Commissioners to bring about this pacification; but that such a Commission may be entrusted with much more propriety to a Committee of the Madras Council, if any new commission is thought necessary.

If a pacification cannot be brought about, it is unquestionably necessary, that the force of the three presidencies should be exerted to *one* point. But how can this be effected by a Commission, which makes it necessary for the persons entrusted with it, to remove from place to place, instead of being confined to the spot of action? and which commission is limited to a term of *three* years, whether the war be concluded or not?

The only effectual means of employing the whole force of the Company, is by a Governor-General, with a Council of State, in which the governor of the particular settlement at which the Governor-General is, might be second.—This takes away the *reproach* to the *service* of a Supervisorship, and instead, hangs out a new object for every man's laudable ambition; but an uncommon office ought not to be *huddled* up in a day.

I confess it appears that Lord Clive's jaghire was granted to little purpose, if it cannot even now be told without a Supervisorship what military expences can be retrenched.

As for the affairs of the Bengal revenue, it seems a very proper subject of enquiry; but it does not seem to require that any extraordinary powers should be given to the Commissioners who are to examine into it.

As it has been hinted these Commissioners are intended to leave laws and regulations behind them, it cannot be considered as foreign to the subject to examine into the circumstances of the various Parts of this great machine, *The Company*.

“ New Powers to govern *our* Servants ” is the cry.—I dare say the man of least capacity in the Direction thinks if *he* had *sufficient powers*, he has *sufficient ability* to make India Utopia. But as an old Company's servant, who have considered the matter long and attentively, I must beg leave to say, the Directors have power *enough* over the Company's servants.

The Causes of the disorder in India have been much misunderstood ; unjust supercessions struck the alarm ; and when men thought their *rights* were *infringed*, and that the *service* was no *inheritance*, it was natural for them, *like tenants for life*, to make the *most* of it.

I remember, when I was a boy at Madras, to have read in the old records, a letter from the Court of Directors with a glow of pleasure : when they appointed Mr. Higginson a factor, they said, “ They hoped none of their servants would take this “ amiss ; for that his father had been a good and faithful servant, and that they considered the son as a *child* of the *Company's*.” This is engaging the virtuous passions on the side of the Direction ; and virtuous passions will do more than all the penal laws which can be contrived.

The original system of the Company's service appears to me to be the wisest imaginable. The Directors have the appointment of *Writers* ; and it is understood that then seniority takes place : any *supercession* or appointment of *new-men*, has been considered as an *act* sanctified by *necessity*, and not a *privilege inherent* in the Direction ; and where-ever there was *not* that necessity, it was an infringement of the *Rights* of the Company's servants.

We are admitted as writers at a time of life when there is scarcely a possibility of having any knavish principle, and before we are much warped by national prejudices ; and tho', perhaps, none without such prejudices are fit for government at home, none with them are suited to have any judicial intercourse abroad with Indians, as much attached as Englishmen to their customs and opinions.

The young men who go abroad in the Company's service cannot be admitted before they are sixteen years of age ; when they arrive in India they are generally employed for some years in copying the proceedings of the Company's Governments, the letters which pass between one Settlement and another, and the Correspondence to and from England. Thus employed, they acquire, insensibly, from habit, a general knowledge of the Company's affairs ; and being unseduced by those systems of dissipation which prevail at home, and secure of their promotion by the regulations of the service, in which every one rises to the council by seniority ; they are not engaged in party by *the hope* of employment, nor occupied in *office* by *fear* of losing it. Thus situated, business of every kind is regularly carried on, and as every one has a view to the highest station, in his turn, every one who has the smallest spark of ambition, must make it his study to qualify himself for that pre-eminence which merit alone can entitle him to, after a series of good-behaviour in the different branches of the service, has, at the end of twelve or fifteen years, introduced him into council. And so well established is the rule of succession, that from an intimate attention to the old records of the Company at Fort St. George, there does appear but one instance where a governor was appointed in preference to men of good character and greater ability, who stood before him on the list of Company's servants, viz. when Thomas Pitt was supplanted to make way for a brother of Mr. Secretary Addison. Ministerial influence has not frequently intervened, and I hope in God the instances in future will be *more rare*. In late times, when party and factions at home overturned every regulation of the service, it is not wonderful that some instances, equally irregular and inconsistent with the Company's interest, should appear, of appointments bestowed on men who had no other claim than their merits with a party.

When I was a young man I thought it hard that there was no scope for ambition ; and that the greatest drone would rise as fast as the man who exerted himself to the utmost ; but reflection

selection has long convinced me, that nothing so often mars a man's elevation as a quick promotion : a man must know that he *cannot* do every thing he pleases, as well as feel that he *can* do much, before he is fit for an important trust. And the power lodged with the administration abroad, to set aside from council any man, unfit by want of ability or misbehaviour, secures the service from an inundation of fools in the higher offices. A council composed entirely of men of genius, would be the worst government in the world. One in ten men in the Company's service may be reckoned a man of superior parts ; of the other nine there will always be enough of sound understanding to conduct the Company's affairs, if by *experiments* at home the chosen few are not driven from their stations ; which give me leave to say was the case at Madras by the successor to Mr. Pigot ; for if Mr. Dupré had been then appointed, all the wars and confusions which have happened since would never have befallen the Company.

Having now shewn, by the general outline of the Company's service, that it is *admirably* adapted to provide *able* men for the administration of their affairs, I will beg leave to compare, with this system, the mode of electing Directors ; and then, let the impartial judge, " Whether a Governor and Council, or a Court of Directors, really have the best title to " the confidence of the public ? " I think it is but fair to suppose the integrity of both on a footing ; at least that of a company's servant, whose life and behaviour has been known and canvassed from a boy, cannot be less trust-worthy than a Director who comes into office without examination, and without being 'till then an object of examination.

A Director may be chosen by a party ; by split-voters who have no interest in the Company's prosperity ; by ministerial influence ; or by stock-jobbers, in hopes of flattering prospects : but an improper person cannot be appointed to any office of consequence in the Company's service without a breach of trust in the Directors, who have that appointment ; nor without the
 expe-

experience of fifteen or twenty years; whereas a Director may come to the chair in as many months.

I presume it must be obvious, that it is a dangerous experiment to change the general system of the Company's Government; but I must say it is a very extraordinary measure to be done in a *hurry*. I have heard it alleged, that the Declaration "of the Company's affairs being in a flourishing situation abroad," is no objection to sending Supervisors; as although, upon the whole, the Company are in a flourishing situation, there is room for corrections and improvements, particularly in the Bengal revenue.

I have heard Mr. Scrafton insinuate, that it does not appear to him there are any such abuses in the revenues of Bengal as some suppose; nor that room for improving them. One thing is certain, that the expence attending the Commission must be very great; I will venture to say £50,000 per annum, which sum appeared to the Chairman of last year so immense, that it was reason enough with him not to make an experiment which promised great advantages to the Company, and to the Commercial Interest of this Kingdom.

But suppose the Bengal revenues can be increased, is it an immediate object at present, as the revenue is as much as can be invested? As the Company's trade is extended, the revenue will of itself increase; and there are many modes of correcting the abuses of collection much more effectual than any effort of temporary Commissioners who are to leave *disgusted* men to carry their plans into execution. I will be bold to say, a good shoe-maker would scorn to sew every stitch in a pair of shoes by *order*. Something must be left to men's pride and dignity, even in the meanest offices and occupations.

A Supervisor must be intended to correct some general or very enormous abuse; and to establish some wise regulation of universal influence: he must, therefore, to answer any good purpose of his commission, be vested with unlimited powers.

Two Supervisors is no absurdity, because, on a difference of opinion, the decision must depend on the voice of *one*, and therefore the Coadjutor is, in fact, nothing more than an assistant.

ant, or a successor, in case of an accident to the other. But *three* Supervisors seems a contradiction in terms.

The duty of a Supervisor is at best very *odious*. To pry into the errors and faults of other men, is an *ungracious task*; but to make it *supportable*, there must be a native purity, and dignity of character in the Supervisor, to impress an opinion that his conduct is the result of *duty* and *virtue*. He must be above the influence of passion or caprice, and mete out his judgments with an equal hand to all men. This degree of *sublime virtue* is seldom found in human nature; but it is *inconsistent* with the feelings and passions of the soul, that it should be found in men, who have been deeply engaged in the disputes, which have arisen from the actions to be examined, or to which they gave rise.

“Cæsar’s wife must not even be suspected!” if there are any *suspensions* hanging on the Supervisor, *in vain* will be his *endeavours* to enforce *virtue* and *order*, by *precept* and *institution*.

I have a very great respect for the military character of Col. Forde; I think the Company are not *more* indebted to any military officer they ever had in their service, than to *that* man, who, scorning to screen himself under an excuse of the slights and injuries he had received, nobly resumed the command at a critical and important juncture, attacked and defeated the Dutch: I admit that his services have not been considered with that attention they deserve, and that he has a better plea to a recompence from the Company than any officer who has been in *Bengal*; because, what was in *others* a duty, was in *him* virtue. But I do not know any quality in Col. Forde, to make me entertain the shadow of an opinion, that he has a claim to go abroad to India in the character of Supervisor. I think the sphere of life in which he has acted, is indeed, a sufficient objection, and can never see any propriety in appointing a Soldier to supervise the affairs of a politico-commercial Company. At the same time, as he has no character to be cleared, no party to serve, I must think this appointment, if it is meant as a reward from the Company, very inadequate to his deserts.

Although no man is farther from a captious desire of investigating and exposing characters, I cannot but think it is requisite very critically to examine those who are proposed for any new and uncommon office. In the ordinary employments of the Company's service, I do not think greater virtue or ability requisite than is commonly to be found; but I think in so important an office as Supervisor, a greater chastity of character is required: for it is not enough that he be as good as *others*; his *trust* being *greater*, it behoves him to be *better*.

I think there are many personal objections to both the other persons proposed for Supervisors; but, to shew that I am not the least inclined to call any man's character or conduct into question, I shall say nothing on this head till the measure is finally determined on. For, if it should be set aside, it is unnecessary to examine whether the persons proposed were or were not fit for so important a trust.

As a friend to the Company, I shall propose two regulations at Home, which I am convinced will be more conducive to their prosperity and independence than any Supervisorship.

1st, "That at every Quarterly Court, each Director shall give
" in writing a full and faithful account of all Transactions he
" has had in India-stock, since the last Quarterly Court.

" 2d. "That no Director shall, directly or indirectly, have
" any Contract under Government, nor Share in Subscription."

I am, GENTLEMEN,

A True Friend to the Company;

June 30,
1769.

And, therefore, with all due Respect,

Your very Humble Servant,

ALEXANDER DALRYMPLE.

*MR. DALRYMPLE presents his Compliments to
he thinks his Duty
to the Company, as a Proprietor, and as an old and faithful Servant,
calls upon him to oppose a Measure which appears to him so injurious
to the Company; and reproachful to the Service: but, at the same
Time, he means through Life to act with the utmost Candour and
Openness; he has, therefore, only printed Twenty-five Copies of
this Letter, that if any Gentleman in the Direction should think
proper to make Objections to any Part, he may have an Opportunity
of weighing these Objections before his Sentiments are communicated to
the World, which he means to do on Wednesday next.*

Soho-Square,
3d July, 1769.

N. B. A Copy of this was sent to each of the Directors.